



RHODE ISLAND
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT
AFL - CIO

To: Senate Finance Committee
From: Jeremy Sencer, RIFTHP Field Representative
Date: May 28, 2026
Re: Voucher Firewall
Testimony in **Support of S 2139** (Bell, et al.)

On behalf of RIFTHP, I submit testimony in support of S 2139, legislation that protects public education funding by requiring legislative approval before Rhode Island participates in a federal school voucher tax credit program.

Rhode Island's public schools depend on stable, transparent funding to support students, educators, and school communities. Programs that divert public resources to private or quasi-private education pathways—particularly without legislative oversight—risk undermining that stability. Across the country, voucher-style programs have raised serious concerns about accountability, equity, and the long-term impact on public school systems.

S 2139 establishes a clear and appropriate safeguard by requiring both the General Assembly and the Governor to affirmatively approve any participation in a federal voucher tax credit program. This ensures that any decision with significant fiscal and policy implications is subject to public debate, legislative scrutiny, and democratic accountability. It also prevents unilateral executive action on an issue that directly affects the structure and funding of Rhode Island's education system.

From the perspective of educators and school staff, maintaining strong public schools requires consistent investment and clear policy direction. Decisions that could redirect funding away from public education must be made transparently and with full consideration of their impact on students, particularly those in high-need districts who rely most on public resources.

For these reasons, RIFTHP urges the Committee to support S 2139.

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